

Information on **Shigella** Infection (*Shigellosis*)

What is Shigella? A bacteria which causes an infection of the intestines.

What are the symptoms? Diarrhea (sometimes with blood or mucus), fever, nausea, abdominal cramps and sometimes vomiting.

How is it spread?

Shigella bacteria are in the intestines of a person who is infected. The bacteria can leave the body in feces. If an infected person doesn't wash her/his hands thoroughly with soap and water after a bowel movement, the hands may be contaminated with bacteria. Spread can occur:

- When a person with contaminated hands touches food, the food may be contaminated with shigella bacteria. Whoever eats the food can then become infected.
- When a person doesn't wash his/her hands thoroughly with soap and water after changing an infected child's diapers.
- Through sexual spread (primarily oral-anal contact).
- By handling or touching fecally-contaminated surfaces and objects (toys, etc.).
- By drinking contaminated water or unpasteurized milk.

How long after being infected does a person become sick? From 1-7 days. Usually 2-4 days.

When can someone with shigellosis spread it to others?

From the time they first get sick until about one month after the symptoms began. Treatment with antibiotics usually reduces the time a person is able to spread the disease to less than a week.

Who is susceptible? Anyone, any age.

How can the spread of shigella be prevented?

- Thorough hand washing with soap and water:
 - after using the toilet
 - after diapering children
 - before handling food
- Disinfect things which may have been contaminated with feces for example, toilet, diaper changing table, faucets, door knobs, refrigerator door handle, toys, etc.

When can a person with shigella return to work or child care?

- **WORK:** People with shigella who care for children or patients and people who work as food handlers must not work while they have diarrhea **and** until no shigella bacteria are isolated from two stool samples collected 24 hours apart.
- **CHILD CARE:** Children with shigella who have diarrhea should not attend child care until their symptoms stop **and** they have two negative stool samples collected 24 hours apart.

What is the treatment?

- Drinking lots of fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Doctors may prescribe an antibiotic.

If you have questions, please call your doctor or local health department.